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ART PHOTOGRAPHY

IN SHORT CHAPTERS.

BY

H. P. ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF "PICTURE MAKING BY PHOTOGRAPHY," ETC., ETC.

"Little sticks kindle the fire; great ones put it out."—OLD SAYING

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H. B. Wilcox.

ART PHOTOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY.

"In our seeking after truth, and endeavour never to be unreal or affected, it must not be forgotten that this endeavour after truth is to be made with materials altogether unreal and different from the object to be imitated; nothing in a picture is real. Though art must be founded on nature, art and nature are distinctly different things."—G. F. WATTS, R.A.



S the science of photography has its formulæ, so has the art of picture-making, in whatever material, its rules. It is not enough to know that a scene is beautiful: the question for the artist is—Will it make a picture? To see this requires a special training. Acute and instant sensitiveness to its "points" is necessary.

It has been objected that when art is reduced to words, truth evaporates. I admit that analysis abolishes sentiment, but these chapters are only intended to teach how to erect the scaffolding by means of which pictorial sentiment is built up; and how is it possible to teach without some settled rules or formulæ? Rules are only intended as a sort of shorthand to arrangement, and are made to be broken when necessary.

It is sometimes said that I never go beyond the structure of a picture in my endeavours to teach art: in fact, that I do not teach art at all. This is quite true, notwithstanding the title of these chapters. I endeavour only to teach the means by which art is produced. It would be presumption in me to try to go further. I have never felt that the poetry of art could be taught, and if it could, there seems to be a sort of desecration in analysing the feeling for the beautiful. It is easy to talk of awe-inspiring mysteries;

it would not be difficult to write volumes of rapturous language,—it is done every day; but what do they mean? I know that, beyond composition and *chiar'-oscu*, which can be taught, there is much which cannot be conveyed in words. That is what an old friend, snapping his fingers, used to call “that.” “That” is too seldom seen in a photograph, or, indeed, in a painting. “That” is the poetry, the thought, the feeling, the sentiment, the something that sends a thrill of pleasure through you—the touch of art, the indescribable essence. “That” is something that can be seen and felt, but which evaporates at the approach of the descriptive word. “That” it is which must be born in a man, or come to him, for it cannot be taught. “That” can be cultivated and improved, but not created.

The artist who wishes to produce pictures by the aid of a camera is governed by the same laws that guide those who use paint and pencil, with, however, this difference: the photographer finds his materials less plastic than those of the painter, his scope more limited. His aim, therefore, should correspond with his possibilities. For, like every other occupation, be it art, science, or mystery, we must admit that photography, as applied to art, has its inherent limitations, to overstep which is to pass the bounds of what is sometimes called good taste. Wonderful as the science is, far-reaching as is its scope, there are things it cannot do; it can penetrate the abyss of the sky and reach a star beyond touch of the telescope, but it cannot produce a historical picture. For portraiture it is perfect, for it gives the facts of the man; for landscape it is adequate, as far as black and white is sufficient; and to *genre* it can, to say the least, be adapted—but there are regions of the imagination to which it cannot soar.

To recognise that he cannot do the impossible will clear away many difficulties for the photographer; to discover that it is well to avoid any approach to the impossible, and judicious to keep clear of the doubtful, will help his artistic progress, while to make the great discovery which man only arrives at after painful experience, that simplicity is more beautiful than complication, will help to complete his education. He should take care also to avoid any chance of bathos. Attempts at the pathetic, or the sham senti-

mental, fail more ignominiously in photography than in any other art. A photographer who attempts this kind of subject has the choice of the two horns of a dilemma ; either he must get his picture with models, and would be guilty of unreal mockery of a solemn thing, or he must photograph real sufferers, on whose misery it would be indecent to intrude. I have been guilty of the former of these offences, but it was thirty years ago, in the innocent age of the art, before we had learnt to know right from wrong.

It has become an affectation with some young artists of late years to despise rules, and they pretend to rely, some of them on genius, some on eccentricity, and others, more modestly, on "good taste." Now, good taste can only be the outcome of knowledge ; there is no such thing as innate good taste. Some may be more receptive of the knowledge from which good taste springs than others, just as one person can learn a foreign language better than another ; but taste is not born in them, and must be the result of what has been learnt, perhaps unconsciously. There is, however, every reason to hope that all this wild talk and contempt for rules is but "from the teeth outwards"—a temporary fad. It is curious that those who preach the abandonment of all rules in their hot artistic youth, in their more mature practice, whether they acknowledge it or not, make use of the laws they pretend to abjure. I have seen a picture by Degas, the shining light of the French impressionists, which obeyed the acknowledged rules of composition perhaps too strictly, except the one that tells us the art should conceal the art, but it was, I must confess, distinguished by one of the greatest beauties of naturalistic work, the complete absence of imagination. It has been well said that this kind of art is an excuse for "imperfect vision and incomplete accomplishment." It is also satisfactory and amusing to find that the one or two English photographers who have tried to distort this phase of the art of painting to the practice of their own art compose their pictures with the precision and formality of Dutchmen. We have no colour to help us, we must get our effects by the aid of light and shade and form. If we give up arrangement, as the new lights appear to do, we are lost, and become mere mechanics or recording machines. They have, however, of late begun to

recognise the necessity and legitimacy of composition and art principles, but object still to the words "law" and "rule."

Colourless, in one sense, as our art is, there is plenty of beauty and enjoyment left in it. If we cannot let our imaginations run wild, we can indulge in pleasant fancies and embody them. We must keep to the truth of nature, but that truth need not always consist of hard facts.

Mr. Walter Pater, in an admirable essay on "Style" in literature, has a very fine observation on truth and fact which is as applicable to photography as any other art.

"Truth! there can be no merit, no craft at all, without that. And further, all beauty is in the long run only fineness of truth—expression—the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within. The transcript of his sense of fact, rather than the fact, as being preferable, pleasanter, more beautiful to him. In literature, as in every other product of human skill, in the moulding of a bell or a platter, for instance, whenever this sense asserts itself, whenever the producer so modifies his work as, over and above its primary use or intention, to make it pleasing (to himself, of course, in the first instance), there 'fine,' as opposed to merely serviceable, art exists. Literary art, that is, like all art which is in any way imitative or reproductive of fact—form, or colour, or incident, is the representation of such fact as connected with soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition, and power."

The transcript of the sense of fact rather than the fact, that is where the true aesthetic pleasure comes in. It is not the mere copying of nature that gives artistic delight, so much as the intellectual pleasure to be derived from getting the best effect out of any given materials, or adding a beauty to that which is already beautiful. It is the sense of creation which gives pleasure, and without this, or something to this effect, photography is not art. In short, "art is interpretation by means of a creative idea."

In concluding this first chapter I wish to give the student a bit of advice which may save him the trouble of following me further. It is this. If you feel the inexorable prompt-

ings of genius within you insisting that y^{ou} shall go your own original way, I counsel you to throw all teachings to the winds, for what is the accumulated wisdom of your forerunners to you? But don't make the fearful blunder of mistaking the will-o'-the wisp of eccentricity for the miracle-working impulse of genius.



CHAPTER II.—NATURE AND ART.

"Nature is not at variance with art, nor art with nature. Art is the perfection of nature. Were the world now as it was the sixth day, there were yet a chaos. Nature hath made one world, and art another. All things are artificial, for nature is the art of God."—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.



THE question may be asked, What is the use of composition; why not go direct to nature, and humbly learn what she has to teach? There is a great deal of nonsense talked about nature by those who know very little about it in relation to art, or, indeed, in any way. There is no word in the language which has so many meanings, and which has been so used and abused, as *nature*. "It is a holy thing," said Mr. Squeers, "to be in a state of nature." It is a "cult" just now to worship nature, or to pretend to, as it used to be the fashion to worship the lily, and it is done about as sincerely. All but the most ardent "naturalists" will now allow selection. They found their first ideas on this subject to be too hasty, and from selection to composition is but a step. Selection would single out a portion of nature that composed well, while composition would alter details so as to make an arrangement of lines and light and shade which experience tells us is most pleasing to the eye.

The use of composition to art is analogous to that of grammar to language. Those who would think nature is everything and art nothing, would prefer the babbling of an infant to the stately measure of the finest literature. Like the immortal teller of Mark Twain's blue jay story, it is the "sickening grammar" that annoys them; they must be free from all academical restraints, or die. The practical man said of "Paradise Lost," "What does it

prove?" If it proved nothing else, it proved that Milton had learnt the A, B, C of his art before he wrote the poem, and knew something of spondees and iambs; dactyls and anapaests; hexameters and pentameters; heroic, elegiac, and lyric measures. In other words, he knew his composition. It is my contention that one of the first things an artist should learn is the construction of a picture. He should learn how to express himself before he begins to deliver his soul. Dogberry expressed naturalistic ideas when he said that reading and writing come by nature; we of the old school don't think so. Composition enables the artist to express himself intelligibly; it helps him to think, and to put his thoughts before others clearly; it aids in seeing quickly what will make a picture when the subject is before him. Instinct, possibly, may lead him right, but a knowledge of composition makes him more assured; it teaches him where to find the weak parts of his subject and how to strengthen them.

I hope it will not be inferred from what I have said that I have no respect for nature, and treat her contemptuously, for nature has been the study of my life. It is only by loving nature, and going to her for everything, that good work can be done; but then we must look to her for the materials for pictures, not for pictures themselves. It is nature filtered through the mind and fingers of the artist that produces art, and the quality of the picture depends on the fineness of the filter.

I have said that all but the most ardent "naturalists" will now allow selection. It is certain that the early impressionist painters were loud in their expression of contempt for anything approaching selection or arrangement; this is quite evident in their works, and I have heard some of them preach the doctrine that all there was in art was the way in which the impression of nature was expressed, and in a pamphlet on "Naturalistic Painting," by Mr. Francis Bate, published two years ago, we read of "some miserable law of composition, 'symmetry,' 'balance,' 'arrangement of line,' 'filling of space,' as though nature does not do all that ten thousand times better in her own pretty way." That composition was not considered part of their art by the naturalistic painters is implied in the following sentence

from an article in the *Magazine of Art* on Bastien Lepage, a painter of whom Dr. Emerson once wrote that he was "the greatest painter that ever lived," but whose work he confesses in his new book on "Naturalistic Photography" to have judged before seeing a specimen of his painting. The passage to which I allude reads as follows:—"The result of logically eschewing all 'picture-making' is inevitably the loss of pictorial qualities, and it is for their pictorial qualities—their composition of line, light, and colour, their relation of masses to detail, in a word, their design—that we have acquired the habit of caring for pictures. That is to say, our feeling towards a work of art, as distinct from the nature which is its material, is exactly proportioned to the amount of man, of mind, of design, that it contains plus its natural material."

This is the view of art that I have always held, and I am glad to find that the naturalists are coming round to my way of thinking. New departures in art, as in other things, often begin in a wild and lawless manner, and, after more or less fluttering, gradually calm down and conform to the wisdom of the majority, not without, I am willing to say, adding some good to the stock of general experience.

It is satisfactory to find that, after being ignored for years, composition has become part of the naturalistic creed. For this we have the authority of Dr. Emerson himself. After saying that "these so called laws are mere arbitrary rules deduced by one man from the works of many artists and writers, and they are no more laws in the true sense than are the laws of phrenology and astrology" (no one has ever said they were), he comes to the conclusion that the student had better study these much-abused rules, and says, "Composition is really selection, and is one of the most—if not the most—vital matters in all art, certainly the most vital in the art of photography." It seems to have been the words "law" and "rule" to which naturalists have objected, and they make the distinction without a difference of calling them "principles." Dr. Emerson goes on to say, "But the writer maintains there are no laws of selection. Each picture requires a special composition, and every artist treats each picture originally; his method of treatment, however, often becomes a law for lesser lights." That

every artist treats his picture originally, is open to doubt, but it is certain he ought to do so, and I am glad that Dr. Emerson has so far modified his opinions as to agree with the rest of the artistic world, and believes in composition. This would give us hope that he would further modify his other extreme opinions on art, if he did not, however, before he got much further, denounce such teachings as nonsense, and Burnet's treatises on Art, from which much of our knowledge is obtained, as "illogical, unscientific, and in-artistic, and has not a leg to stand on." But, on the other hand, again, he gives a rule for composition with which the greatest upholder of the experience of the great artists as it has come down to us would thoroughly agree,—“The objects must be arranged so that the thing expressed is told clearly and directly; in short, the student should try to express his subject as it has never been expressed before; all things not connected with the subject should be removed, and all but the chief thing to be expressed should be carefully subdued. The interest must not be divided, but all must go to help the expression of the *motif* of the picture. Thus a white patch of the size of a threepenny piece may ruin a 12 × 10 plate, as many a time a hat, basket, or other small article has done; just as a false line may ruin an otherwise fine stanza. Be careful how you introduce a detail; it may either make or mar your picture.”

I have gone into the question as to whether the naturalistic school admitted composition, because I should like to prove that all art depends more or less on selection and arrangement, which I take the word to mean. I think we may claim Dr. Emerson as one who admits composition, but he so “lets I dare not, wait upon I would,” in his chapter on the subject, that I cannot be sure.



CHAPTER III.—THE APPLICATION OF
COMPOSITION.

"Connection is a principle always present to the painter's mind, and by the guidance of which he considers all sets of objects, whatever may be their character or boundaries, from the most extensive prospect to the most confined wood scene; neither referring everything to the narrow limits of his canvas, nor despising what will not suit it, unless, indeed, the limits of his mind be equally narrow and contracted; for when I speak of a painter I mean an artist, not a mechanic."

UVEDALE PRICE.



BEFORE going further, it may perhaps be well to give a couple of illustrations of the uses of composition in picture making. One shall be the work of a painter, the other that of a photographer. The latter will be one of my own, and I may here take the opportunity of saying, once for all, that in giving illustrations from my own pictures, I do not offer them as perfect compositions, but as examples of the use a knowledge of composition may be to a photographer. Ruskin has been accused of finding more in Turner's pictures than the artist meant, an accusation I shall escape when using my own works. Both of the examples are of the most ordinary form of composition.

The first illustration is from Turner's vignette of "Loch Achray." The scene in itself is fine, but the *picture* is made by the minute spots of black in the foreground, which are so small that they serve to show how very little will make all the difference between art and nature. If the finger is placed over these spots, the scene will be found to become

grey and loose in effect. Nevertheless it is full of tone (Turner has taken care of this by artificially darkening some of the masses), but the distant mountain does not retire. Turner's knowledge of composition taught him that some spots of extreme dark in the foreground would act



Loch Achray.

as a keynote to the forms, and would put the masses into tone, therefore he introduced the cattle and the foreground trees. These spots of black form a continuous curved line contrasting the contours of the mountain and the hills in the middle distance. Although they are dark spots, there is gradation in them; the nearest trees are lighter than the animals, there is atmosphere between them; the trees in

the next plane are still lighter, and those still farther off, although used as distinct points of composition, are much diminished in intensity of shade: these retiring masses carry the eye into the picture. There is a great deal more in these few inches of real picture, but I only want to give the points useful to the photographer, without troubling him with the extreme subtleties of the science of composition—pausing, however, to point out that the animals in the water may be cattle or they may be deer—they are too small to distinguish. It did not matter to Turner; he was no naturalist, and I don't suppose he knew the difference between a cow and a heifer, and probably never heard either of them called a stirk; he only wanted the spots of black to aid his composition.

The frontispiece to this book is from a photograph; the title, "Wayside Gossip." The scene of this picture is, in itself, not worth a quarter-plate, and is only made into a picture by the choice of light and shade and the figures. The screen of trees is certainly pretty in form, but there are awkward lines in the lower half of the subject. The lights were scattered and dazzling, each of them points of attraction, and each one equal to its neighbour. There were, therefore, two principal difficulties to contend with in this subject—awkward lines and scattered lights. Now, there is one sovereign remedy for the latter difficulty. It is this: When the lights are so scattered over a picture as to distract the eye, bring them into a focus. To do this, add to the foreground some object that consists of a darker black and a brighter white than is to be found in any other part. Instantly all the little touches of white in the water and the trees lose their aggressiveness, and are subdued by the superior attraction; subordination is established, and the distance becomes atmospheric. Then there were the awkward lines to combat. In this I feel I did not completely succeed. I tried first with the two figures, relying on the bunch of nettles in the left-hand corner for balance; but before I took out the slide I felt the parallel paths must be broken up at any cost, and tried again, introducing the third figure. This was better, but a shawl or any rather dark object placed across the water-dam, a little way from

the two figures, would have broken the line still more and been a great improvement.

I have given these examples of composition early in these chapters, that the student may see that a picture has not only to be found, but made. In a properly composed picture the effect to the uninitiated should be that it happened in nature just as it appears in the finished result. It should look like a happy chance. The effect to those who know nothing of art should be pictorial and pleasing, but the artist will find an added pleasure in tracing the means by which success is attained. It is a well-known canon of art that the art should conceal the art—which means that the art should be so good that to the ordinary observer there is no effect of effort; this can only be achieved by a thorough knowledge of what will produce certain effects. Yet even this artful concealment of art should not be carried too far, for on the one hand the object of art is not deception, and on the other an ostentatious display of knowledge defeats itself. When the student has mastered the few simple rules of picture-making he may make use of them as he likes, and he will be surprised to find what a great help they will be to him. He will find in them a wonderful solution of the doubt that troubles the young beginner in the selection of his subject, and the still greater difficulty, what to do with his figures. He will, I hope, be able to do better than take the advice of one of our best writers in photography, to shirk the difficulty, and leave them out altogether—advice most admirable to those who, from deficient art-knowledge, always contrive to put them in the wrong places, and spoil their pictures.

I will conclude with a sentence from Ruskin, which sums up the whole question :—

“The great object of composition being always to secure unity—that is, to make of many things one whole—the first mode in which this can be effected is by determining that one feature shall be more important than all the rest, and that the others shall group with it in *subordinate* positions.”



CHAPTER IV.—TERMS USED IN ART.

"Every art, from reasoning to riding and rowing, is learned by assiduous practice; and if principles do any good, it is proportioned to the readiness with which they can be converted into rules, and the patient constancy with which they are applied in all our attempts at excellence."

THOMPSON'S "OUTLINES OF THE LAWS OF THOUGHT."



DO not propose in these chapters to do more than allude incidentally to the rules of composition. I have already in a little book of mine* gone into the subject as far as I thought it would be useful to photographers, and an American reprint of Burnet's once scarce book on "Composition and Light and Shade" is now to be easily obtained, but there are certain technical terms used in art which it may be useful to explain before we go further.

Composition is to art what grammar is to literature, and harmony to music. A badly-composed picture is to the artist what a "nice derangement of epitaphs" would be to the literary man, or "sweet bells jangling out of tune" to the musician. The object of composition is to so set forth the subject of your picture that it should have the most agreeable appearance without any sacrifice of the truth of nature. This is done by as proper a distribution of lines and masses as the subject will admit. It has been recently stated that composition is a modern idea, or sort of after-thought of art, but it can be proved that all artists from the time of the Ancient Egyptians based their work on some fixed system.

Chiaroscuro refers to the management of light and shade

* "Pictorial Effect in Photography." Piper and Carter.

in a picture. It may be said that a landscape photographer has no power of altering the light and shade on his subject. This I admit, but he can select his time of day, and the knowledge of what arrangement of masses of light and shade will produce the most brilliant and striking pictorial effect will be found to be of the greatest use, and will enable him to obtain not only the best the subject will give, but novel effects which would be lost on the ordinary photographer, who only cares for an enumeration of the features of nature. It may be worth while to give an illustration of what I mean. Photographers so run, or rather stagnate, in grooves that, until the last few years, they would not willingly take a view that was not lighted in the orthodox manner with the light coming from behind the camera, or to the right or left of it, so that all possible detail might be brought out. Until I took "*Wayside Gossip*" (of which there is a cut in the last chapter) in 1882, I do not remember seeing a landscape in which, by deliberate choice, the sun was allowed to be in front of the lens; yet this picture is made, with the help of the figures, by this choice of light and shade. There is a good deal in nature which, for the purpose of picture-making, had better be done without, and the photographer often has the choice of suppressing or subduing the surplusages of nature by watching his opportunity and getting the parts to be subdued in shadow. A clever essayist says, "Surplusage! in truth, all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be, lying somewhere, according to Michael Angelo's fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone."

Chiaroscuro is sometimes sufficient without any, or with very little, detail to make a picture, even in our mechanical art. The illustration on page 17, from a beautiful little photograph by Mr. C. L. Coppard, has no detail whatever, except a little in the most important place—the clouds round the dying sun—but the picture, as a poetical representation of the time when all that is left of day is a glow in the west, is perfect. I am quite aware that it happens that a photograph is often beautiful with "unpremeditated art," but I

know that this little picture was done by the deliberate choice of a skilful artist.

The objects of *chiaroscuro* are, first, to give a pleasing general effect by dividing the space into masses of light and shade, giving breadth of effect, and preventing that confusion and perplexity incident to the eye being attracted by numerous parts of equal importance. Secondly, to so arrange and light the principal object that the eye may see it first and be gradually and insensibly led over the whole



Sunset.

picture; to keep parts in obscurity and to relieve others, according to their pictorial value. And, thirdly, to aid the sentiment and expression of the picture.

Unity.—The result of a proper employing of the resources of composition and *chiaroscuro* should be a harmonious whole. There should be unity of effect, and nothing should appear to outrage nature or common sense; above all, there should be no interference with the sentiment of the picture. It has been argued that everything that could possibly happen in nature would be right in a picture, but there are many things that jar on the eye in nature and are without interest. I have given an illustration in "*Pictorial Effect*" of how a young man in modern dress—in top hat, frock

coat, and stick, "a Waterloo House young man"—disagrees with the sentiment of a country lane; this has been gravely objected to by the reader of a paper on "Art" at one of the provincial societies, for the reason that "modern-dressed people are frequently to be seen in country lanes." That it is possible for them to be there, is no reason whatever why they should be in harmony with the scene. The question is, do they aid the picture? An incident may be natural and yet incongruous. The writer even says, rather inconsequently, that "this idea is a relic of those times when it was considered the correct thing by critics to represent all figure-subjects in classical costume, no matter what date the event may have taken place." It is not very evident how this applies, and if it did, it is not worthy of serious refutation.

There can be very little satisfaction in a picture which is devoid of unity. No perfect feeling of pleasure will be conveyed to the mind if the lights are scattered, if breadth of light and shade be not preserved, or if two or more episodes, unconnected with each other, appear in the same scene. Unity is opposed to scattered ideas, scattered lines, scattered lights. However much variety there may be in a picture, there must be unity of purpose; there must be a fit connection of all parts to the whole. One leading idea must be maintained, there must be no confusion. In most landscapes there will be found some object of more importance than the rest; the photographer will, in many instances, have by choice of position the opportunity of increasing this effect so as to make the most of it. It often happens that unity is utterly destroyed by ill-chosen or ill-placed figures. Without unity there can be no repose.

Repose may be described shortly as the absence of that agitation which is induced by glaring colour or the scattering and division of a subject into too many unconnected parts, or the frittering away of the effect by too many lights. The eye is perplexed from not knowing where to rest, or where to find the important points of the subject. Even when a picture is full of action, a thing not quite desirable in a photograph, it is better if there is repose somewhere.



CHAPTER V.—TERMS USED IN ART (*continued*).


"Divested of design, art becomes a mere toy, a mechanical bauble, unconnected with either the head or the heart, uninteresting to the wise and good, unprofitable to all, and amusing only to the weak and idle."

BARRY.

BALANCE AND CONTRAST.



OF all that can be taught of art or that can be adapted to photography, nothing could be of more use to the photographer than a good knowledge of balance and contrast in their various forms. They, with chiaroscuro, are the most essential elements of composition in black and white, and it will be convenient to take them together. Few things are capable of accurate definition; and simple things, such as those on which I am now writing, defy analysis, from the difficulty of finding terms more simple and intelligible than the thing defined, and are the least manageable.

All leading lines and masses should be balanced or compensated. Several lines running in one direction, thus / / / /, would give a sense of falling if they were not balanced by other lines running in another direction opposing them, thus //—; or if lines run diagonally down a picture thus , a compensation for the longer lines is found in the shorter, more upright line, or a mass of dark may be substituted. The application of this rule in various forms will be found useful in nearly every scene in nature. For example, in taking a view looking up the beach of a fishing village, the buildings will be generally found to pile

up to the right or left, and the composition runs off to nothing towards the sea; the effect is weak and unsatisfactory. But if a boat or other object is introduced in the weak spot, it will balance the lines of the buildings, throw back the distance, and make a picture of what was otherwise merely a weak view. In a landscape, also, a poor subject may be made into a good one by the introduction of sheep or cattle or figures into the weak place, to balance the stronger masses. A knowledge of the principle of balance will enable the student to find the weak place and what to do with it.

Nearly allied to balance of lines is contrast, which may be described as the opposing of things of different aspect to each other, so as to bring out the fullest and best effect of each, such as the position and variety of heads, youth and age, light and shade, etc. It would require a large number of illustrations and more space than I can afford, to show the great variety that balance and contrast can assume, but if the student can get hold of the leading idea he will soon find how to apply it.

TONE.

Ruskin defines tone as "the exact relief and relation of objects against and to each other in substance and darkness, as they are nearer and more distant, and the perfect relation of the shades of all of them to the chief light of the picture, whether that be sky, water, or anything else." And he goes on to say, "The word tone is liable to be confounded with what is commonly called 'aërial perspective.' But aërial perspective is the expression of space by any means whatsoever, sharpness of edge, vividness of colour, etc., assisted by greater pitch of shadow, and requires only that objects should be detached from each other, by degrees of intensity in *proportion* to their distance, without requiring that the difference between the farthest and nearest should be in positive quantity the same that nature has put." No art has the same range of tones as nature. Her brightest light is the sun, her deepest dark is vacuity from which no light is reflected. Our light is white paper, our dark is only a dark from which light is reflected, and which against nature's gloom would tell as distinct light. All then that the photographer can do, beyond selection

of subject and the introduction of figures dark or light, to give tone, is to so accurately balance his exposure and development as to give the nearest approach to the truth of nature.

A beautiful example of balance, both of lines and tones, as well as of expression, is to be found in Mr. Gale's charming picture (of which I am pleased to give an illustration) to which he has given the very appropriate title, "Sleepy Hollow." Mr. Gale, in his little pictures, always contrives to show how much art can be packed into a small space.

I will leave the student to find out for himself how beautiful are the lines of the composition, merely suggesting that he should try to imagine any part of the composition left out, even to the stone and post in the water, and the dark arch under the bridge, and he will immediately feel the want of it. As to the tone, let him take away the man and horses, and what becomes of the rest? It is a pretty scene, but without the figures would have no particular interest. The black of the horses by contrast puts atmosphere into the whole of the picture, and makes every bit of it valuable.

VARIETY.

It has been said by Dr. Johnson that the great source of all pleasure is variety. This sentiment was written in reference to the pleasure to be derived from literature, but is applicable to all our enjoyments, especially those derived from art. Uniformity, even of excellence, must tire at last; we cannot always be eating sugar, a touch of vinegar is a welcome change sometimes, "linked sweetness" may be too long drawn out. Notwithstanding that variety is so necessary, it is not to be obtained without difficulty and study. Perhaps to a writer on one small section of a many-branched art like photography, the most irksome kind of variety is that which is necessary to enable him to say anything new, or apparently new. It is especially difficult in this and the previous chapter, but when truths are wanted it is better to reiterate than be dumb, more particularly when it is evident by their works that many photographers, if they have read the same old tale before, have not sufficiently applied its teaching.



Sleepy Hollow.

Without variety of line and light and shade, no composition can be complete. Variety of forms should always be secured. No tree, however firmly grown and vigorous, is so picturesque as others, inferior though they may be in size, presenting variety of outline and intricacy of detail. A group of figures with the faces turned in one direction, all with the same expression, would be monotonous and not interesting as a picture. But in seeking variety simplicity must not be forgotten or lost. The nature of



Wagon and Horses.

photography itself supplies much intricacy and detail. No amount of ingenuity in varying positions and aspects of figures will compensate for loss of simplicity and repose.

SUBORDINATION.

“By what he omits show me the master of style,” says Schiller. Subordination means the sacrifice of parts to the improvement of the whole. A conscientious painter will often sacrifice work that has taken him weeks to paint if he finds that it is obtrusive and detracts from the effect of the principal object. A photographer should not hesitate to sun down, or otherwise get rid of, ‘glittering lights,

awkward forms, multitudinous niggling details, or anything that interferes with the breadth and simplicity of the effect.

BREADTH.

Without breadth no picture can really please as a picture, however perfect it may be in its separate parts. It may please by its subject, by its drawing, by its colour, but if it has not breadth of effect, there will be no perfect satisfaction for the eye. All lights and shades which are interrupted and scattered are more irritating to the eye than those which are broad and continuous. This does not mean that there should be no extreme contrast in the light and shade of picture, for contrast, properly employed, is one of the most important elements of pictorial effect. The illustration on the previous page, from a photograph by Mr. Copford, is an excellent example of breadth of effect.

The dark mass of the waggon and horses, slightly relieved by half-tones, and emphasised in places by lighter but not obtrusive touches, rises boldly against the broad light of the stormy sky, giving breadth and brilliancy, and a poetical feeling which is more easily felt than analysed.



CHAPTER VI.—FORMS OF COMPOSITION.

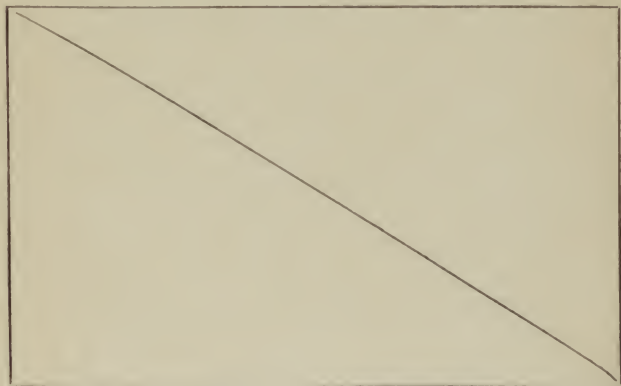
"The axiom that the most perfect art is that in which the art is most concealed is directed, I apprehend, against an ostentatious display of the means by which the end is accomplished, and does not imply that we are to be cheated into a belief of the artist having effected his purpose by a happy chance, or by such extraordinary gifts as have rendered study and pains unnecessary."

LESLIE.



COMPOSITION, in the elementary form in which only it can be of use to photographers, is not the seriously formal and pedantic matter that some people seem to suppose. Its simple idea is to obtain picturesque variety, and to get this there must be some system, and system has been deduced from the experience of artists of all times. All artists must compose. The most advanced "naturalistic" would not think, for instance, of making a picture of, say, half-a-dozen figures of the same height standing side by side with their heads all in a row. It must be conceded that such an arrangement would not make an agreeable result in the hands of the greatest artist, be he painter or otherwise. If he had any sense of the picturesque he would so alter the constituents of the group that no two heads were of equal height, nor appeared one immediately above or below another. He, perhaps, would not admit he was composing, but "just varying them a little." All the same, he would be arranging his material into pyramidal forms, a conclusion from which, under the circumstances, there is no escape, as a little experimenting would easily show.

Again, the veriest tyro will see that many things look better in one aspect than another. If a view of a street were desired, he would not take the houses horizontally from the opposite side of the way. In however small a degree he had an eye for the beautiful, he would take the view from a point where the houses ran from him in perspective, thus unconsciously getting a diagonal line which is part of a pyramidal form. Then if he were endowed with a little greater appreciation of the picturesque, he would not plant his camera in the middle of the street. He would, perhaps, not be able to explain why, but he would see that



a view with two equal sides did not "look well," and would alter his position a little to right or left, by which he would get the long diagonal line on one side the street, balanced by the shorter side, and secure, without knowing it, good composition.

But if he had studied some of the simple rules of composition before he set up his camera, what an advantage it would have been to him! He would have gone to his subject with greater confidence in himself, and he would be more certain of the minor details of the arrangement. For instance, if there were moving figures he would know at

once when they were in the right place without having to stop to think until too late.

It is, of course, not possible for the photographer to force his subject into any arbitrary arrangement he pleases, but if he knows the forms of composition that have obtained most favour with painters it will be some guide to him, at all events, in the selection, and at times in the disposition of his materials.

One of the objects of composition being to obtain variety, it has been found that the greatest amount is to be secured by forms following the diagonal line. It does not require



a demonstration that square forms would not be effective inside the frame of a right-angled picture, or that dividing the space into equal parts would be most ineffective. These difficulties are avoided by the diagonal line. Burnet gives an example of this, after Cuyp, which he calls "angular composition." It is reproduced here. Having myself written a good deal on this subject elsewhere, it is a relief and satisfaction to show what another writer has to say in the same connection. Burnet says, "Cuyp, in adopting this mode of composition in most of his pictures (which are generally sunset or sunrise), places the focus of light at the bottom of

the sky, thereby enabling the distant part of the landscape to melt into it by the most natural means; while the strongest part of his sky, being at the opposite angle, produces the greatest expanse, and mixes and harmonises with the dark side of the picture. Thus the eye is carried round the composition until the two extremes are brought in contact, the most prominent with the most retiring."

"In compositions constructed on this principle (particularly where the landscape occupies a large portion) many artists carry the lines of the clouds in a contrary direction, to counteract the appearance of all the lines running to



one point. Thus using the darks of the clouds, etc., to *antagonise*, as it is termed, may apparently produce a better equipoise, but sacrifices many advantages; for we observe in many of the pictures of Cuyp, Rubens, and Teniers, where the figures, landscape, and sky are all on the same side of the composition, that a rich and soft effect is produced; the strong light and dark touches of the figures telling with great force against a background of houses, trees, etc., which are prevented from being harsh and cutting by mixing their edges with the clouds, or dark blue of the sky. Those who imagine that, by thus throwing

the whole composition on one side, a want of union will be produced, will be convinced of their error by perceiving how small an object (*the boat*) restores the balance; since, by its being detached and opposed to the most distant part, it receives a tenfold consequence."

That the student should see that the same principle is capable of great variation, I give two other illustrations from Burnet, subjects that may be often met with. These little etchings will also serve as illustrations of balance and contrast referred to in the last chapter.

In this sketch the cow forms the balancing point; in



the following illustration the contrasting lines are in the tree.

The next illustration shows the application of the same form of composition to one of Claude's classical landscapes, and the last sketch shows the application of the same principle, by Ostade, to an interior.

Another and more complicated method of composition consists in an arrangement of pyramidal forms, built upon and combined with one another; not, however, regular pyramids, which would be too formal, but of irregular form and differing in size. This method is very suitable to single

figures and groups, and a knowledge of it will be found useful in landscape photography, especially when figures are introduced. I do not mean to go into the subject here. To deal with it properly would require many illustrations and more space than can be afforded in these short chapters; but it would be a valuable lesson to the student to trace out the meaning and masses of the great masters, ancient or modern, and he would find it an interesting study



to make notes and diagrams of the composition of great pictures.

There are other forms of composition used by artists, but none of them would be of any value to the photographer. There are also infinite subtleties into which it is not worth while to enter, for they could not be followed in our limited art, and we must never forget our limits. Goethe says

somewhere, "It is working within limits that the master reveals himself." And I must warn the student that composition is not art, but only the means to an artistic end, just as the teaching of art-schools is only intended to teach the working of the machinery by which art is made.



CHAPTER VII.—THE SKY.

"It is often said, study nature ; but nature does not compose ; her beautiful arrangements are accidental combinations, and none but an educated eye can discover why they are so. Nature does, and ought to, supply the materials for fine pictures ; but to select and reject, to adopt the individual parts to the production of a perfect whole, is the work of the artist, and this it is that stamps the emanations of genius."—BURNET.



LANDSCAPE photograph, with a mass of white paper to represent the sky, is altogether unnatural, is not true, and lacks beauty. In nature every space is false which represents nothing.

The sky should be a harmonious and sympathetic background to the landscape, or there are subjects in which the sky plays the leading part. The latter is a vein in the picture mine which has been very little worked, "which is to be observed better by seeing one of them than by a large demonstration of words," as Isaak Walton says when he is trying to describe some fatal lure for the fish. In this kind of picture the sky should occupy three-fourths, or at least two-thirds, of the space, and some little incident should be introduced into the strip of foreground to supply a title, if the clouds themselves are not sufficiently impressive or suggestive to give a name to the picture. An illustration of this kind of picture is given in "Feeding the Calves."

In many subjects, such as sea views and distant expanses of country, it is easily possible to secure the sky on the same plate with the landscape, but it is not always that the best pictorial results can be produced by this means. All skies that appear in nature are to some extent suitable

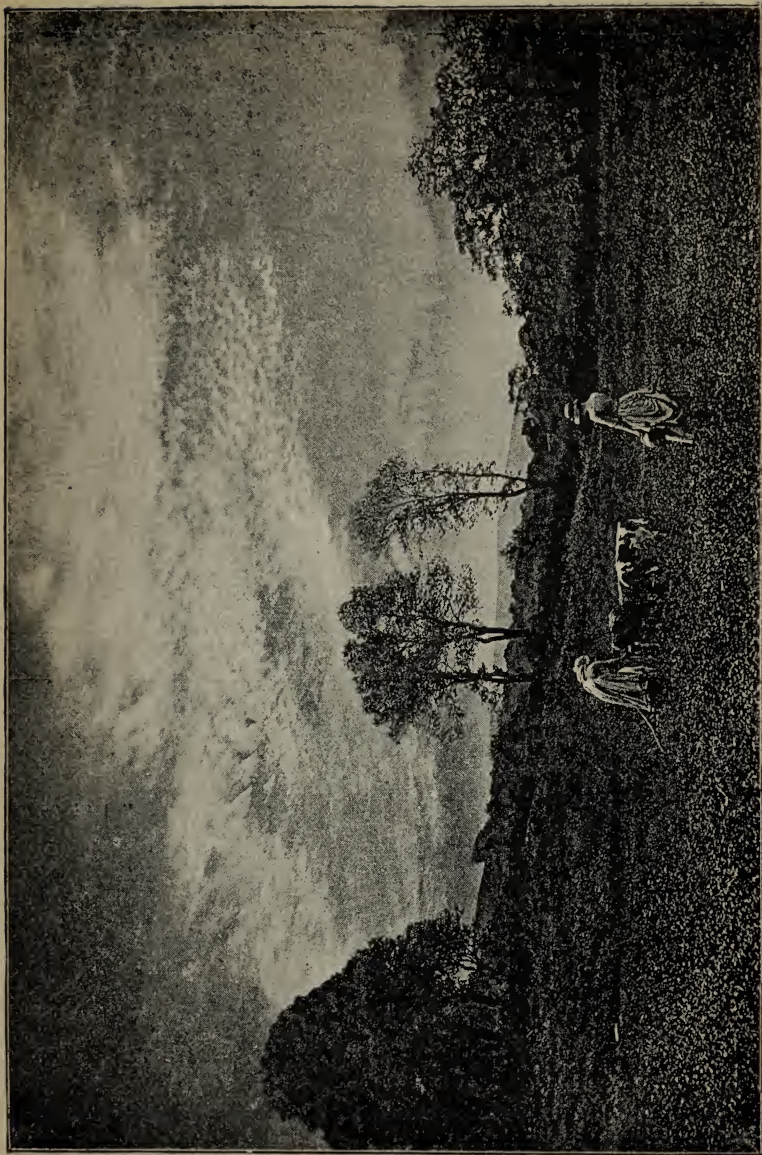
to the views of which they are the background, but it does not follow that they are always the most picturesque, or conducive to pictorial effect; therefore all I have to say to obtaining the clouds on the same negative as the foreground is, get them if you can, and if the sky and foreground make an agreeable whole, be thankful, and exhibit the picture, but if it is not a pictorial success, stop out the sky with black varnish on the negative and print a suitable one in its place. The sky changes incessantly, and it does not follow that the one you happen to find when you take the view is the best. Besides, if you rely upon chance you no longer depend upon art, and if a photographer throws away that, he loses his best support, and had better give up the idea of making original pictures in which he can show his own taste and feeling.

There was a time when it was necessary to apologise for, or to argue the legitimacy of, adding a sky to a landscape from a separate negative. This was in the bad old times when it was considered fraudulent to improve your picture in any way; when the fine old-cruised purists would prefer to have a photographed face peppered over with black spots caused by freckles almost invisible in nature, or a blank white sky also untrue to fact, rather than have the sacred virginity of the negative tampered with. We know better now. So that the modesty of nature is not overstepped (which, however, happens daily, more is the pity, by some retouchers), anything is allowed to be legitimate, and so that their skies are not glaringly wrong, photographers are allowed to get them as they please, either with the landscape, if they can or the accident of nature allows, or separately, which latter method enables the artist to succeed by art instead of chance. In art, it goes without saying, it is better that all should be true; but I don't mind confessing that I would prefer a beautiful untruth, so that it was not too glaring, to an ugly fact. Nature is utterly indifferent as to the beauty of the sky she sends us, and, with equal truth, there are variations in beauty. It is the practice of the scientist to be satisfied with anything so that it is true, it is the function of the artist to search for and select the beautiful. Art must be true to nature, but it is *not* necessary for art to "hold the mirror up to nature." Mr. Oscar

Wilde, in one of the most amusing essays on art* ever written, denies that this unfortunate aphorism represents Shakspeare's real view of art, but was only a dramatic utterance deliberately put into Hamlet's mouth to convince the bystanders of his absolute ignorance of art matters. I have heard a young painter argue that as skies taken at a different time from the landscape left the selection open to the judgment of the photographer it must therefore be wrong. When it was retorted on him that he himself, like other painters, was guilty, not only of selecting his sky, but also of altering it to suit his composition, he seemed surprised that anyone should think an "artist" (from which class he excluded photographers because they are guilty of using different materials to do the same things as himself) was not infallible. Yet I think I would as soon trust the judgment of a photographer who has studied nature all his life—Mr. Gale, for example—to select a suitable sky, as I would any R.A. of the immortal forty.

Nevertheless photographers, unfortunately, exhibit an amazing ignorance of the sky. It is one of the strangest facts in modern English education that the one form of ignorance which is not considered more or less disgraceful is a total ignorance of natural laws and natural phenomena. Every boy knows all about the immoralities of mythology, but of the sights and scenes which occur again and again, day after day, and year after year, he is expected to know nothing. Even eminent novelists make the new moon rise in the evening, and water run upwards, and it would possibly puzzle my gentle reader to say how clouds were formed, or why the sun shines. A photographer ignorant of the place occupied in the heavens by a particular form of cloud will point his camera to the zenith and print the result low down on the horizon; indeed, I have seen the cirrus made to descend behind the sea line, and then the critics abuse the art because one of its followers displays his ignorance of natural laws. A painter who knew no better would make the same mistake, but we must concede that the painter has a better opportunity of study. He has the facts of nature more inti-

* "The Decay of Lying," *Nineteenth Century*, January 1889.



Feeding the Calves.

mately before him, and takes longer to study them than does the average photographer. The one sees and copies, the other, as a rule, sees and exposes and forgets. The photographer should make up for this by more diligent study. It is a good plan to walk abroad with a friend of kindred disposition to study the sky effects and other aspects of this beautiful world, and talk them over on the spot, pointing out the effects and arguing over their causes. The solitary observer may see as much but is not so likely to have it impressed on his memory.

As an example of the kind of phenomena to notice, let the observer, when at the seaside, mark the effect of clouds as they recede to the horizon. He will probably observe that no forms of clouds ever go quite down to the horizon. They become fainter as they recede, but, as far as I have observed, they never go behind, there is always a thin line of plain sky. This is caused by the mist, which is always on the sea, more or less, in our latitudes.

Although I have said I should prefer a beautiful untruth to an ugly fact, I cannot deny that more truth, within its limits, is expected of photography than of any other method of representation, and we must give all the truth we possibly can. If we cannot give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, then we must lie like truth, which after all is perhaps as good a definition of art as we have.

There are some conditions in adding skies to landscapes which must be observed as strictly as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The sky *must* be lighted from the same direction as the landscape. Painters, being chartered libertines, sometimes light their landscapes from two sources, but it is suicide to the photographer. I think also they should both be taken at approximately the same time of year. I have heard it gravely argued that a sky taken on the 30th of April was not suitable to a landscape taken upon May-day, but then scientists will say anything to puzzle the photographer.

Then again there is a bit of common sense which is continually evaded by photographers. No sky should be used for a second picture. It is ludicrous to see the same sky doing duty through a series of photographs, especially when they

are exhibited in the same frame. Years ago I was one of the judges at the exhibition of the Photographic Society of Great Britain, and we gave a medal to a certain picture containing a certain sky; I have noticed this sky, tacked on to a different landscape, in every succeeding exhibition, and in the last it appeared in three pictures, two of them hung side by side. There is a rule that no picture shall be exhibited a second time, but I suppose this does not apply to parts of pictures.

A word ought to be said on the subject of obtaining the sky negatives. The most suitable negative is one in which the darkest parts of the clouds are represented by bare, or nearly bare, glass. They print effectively and quickly, and it is easier to see how to place them when nearly transparent. This quality was, in my hands, less difficult to get in the wet process than the dry, but the former is, of course, quite out of the question now. I have found the quickest plates useless, and succeed best with slow ones. The best skies I have got were taken on chloride plates exposed by hand, not shutter.

It is generally supposed that only those clouds which give very definite and strongly contrasted effects of light and shade are suitable for photographing; but this is a delusion. All skies can be photographed, but the more delicate ones require more care and skill.

The method of adding a sky to a landscape will be given in a future chapter.



CHAPTER VIII.—FIGURES IN LANDSCAPES.

"Full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, but the gift is good in those in whom it is acute, and I am thankful for it."—SHAKESPEARE.



FOR many years I have advocated the more artistic introduction of appropriate figures into landscapes, and I am glad to find that amateurs are taking up a branch of the art that has been too much neglected by professional photographers. During the first thirty or forty years of photography the most grotesque absurdities were perpetrated, and it was very rare to see a landscape in a photographic exhibition in which anything like an attempt was made to introduce figures which had any pretensions to belong to the scene, still less to tell anything like a story by means of figures, or to add poetical effect by the help of added skies or choice of light and shade; the one aim was to get a "sharp" picture of a scene so lighted as to bring out all the detail. Professional photographers had an excuse for this beyond the reach of amateurs. It was found that such pictures "did not pay" so well as the ordinary eternal round of portraiture. The market for them was limited. It was only a photographer here and there, such as Rejlander, who cared to put himself out of the way towards advancing photography as an art. Gradually better things have been attempted, if not in all cases with complete success; and in the later exhibitions this class of picture has been very prominent, the measure of success ranging from the complete down to failure. But however signally some have failed, it is very satisfactory to see so many attempts which, if

not perfect at present, promise success in the future. The class of pictures to which I allude have never had the encouragement of a medal set apart for them in any exhibition. Much as the managers of exhibitions have strained their ingenuity to find classes of pictures for which to offer medals, they never seem to have thought of landscapes and figures combined to form a subject. I mean the kind of picture with which the Royal Academy is half filled every year—pictures in which figures are sometimes dominant and sometimes subordinate, but always important.

There are, it must be confessed, some scenes in nature which are better without life; there are others that will do without it; but nearly all scenes are enriched, beautified, and made more interesting by a touch of life; the loveliest scenes within the reach of photography make no appeals to our intellects or our hearts unless there is some hallowing touch of human association. This extends to literature as well as to art. An instance of failure in a great writer for the want of human interest in his work is in the memory of us all. No writer ever approached Richard Jefferies, the author of "*The Gamekeeper at Home*," in his description of nature. His insight, his close observation, his minute, exact, and loving description, his brilliant photographs in words, have never been equalled by any previous attempt in the same direction. He made a great reputation by his first books, but the interest soon fell off, and readers got tired of artistically faultless work which contained little or no human interest. It is not enough to catalogue nature. A sculptor may exactly imitate a bit of lace in marble, a painter may sit down before a scene and copy it inch by inch, or a photographer may fill his plate with minute definition, but it takes more than this to make a picture. Ruskin gives a homely illustration, which seems to hit the situation exactly: "If we see an old woman," he says, "spinning at the fireside, and distributing her threads dexterously from the distaff, we respect her for her manipulation; if we ask her how much she expects to make in a year, and she answers quickly, we respect her for her calculation; if she is watching at the same time that none of her grandchildren fall into the fire, we respect her for her observation; yet for all this she may still be a commonplace

old woman enough. But if she is all the time telling her grandchildren a fairy tale out of her head, we praise her imagination, and say she must be rather a remarkable old woman."

The application is almost too clear to need pointing out. The photographer may be perfect in his manipulation, his use of exposure tables may be precise and mathematical, he may be skilful in selecting subjects, all three most respectable departments of the art, but the attainment of great skill does not, now-a-days, rise above the commonplace. If he wants to rise above the level he must tell us fairy tales out of his own head, he must add something to his pictures which is not to be found in ordinary photographs; in short, he must add his own personality to it, and that personality should have a poem in it, be it ever so small and weak.

If we want further evidence, Miss Lucy Crane, in her admirable lectures on art, says, "A photograph is a closer following of nature than any picture can be, and the photographic view or portrait contains the elements, the material of a picture; but for want of selection, combination, composition, and, above all, for want of a human mind and soul acting on the materials, it is not a picture."

It has been too much the custom for writers on art to assume that art by means of photography is impossible under any circumstances, that the camera cannot think, and, therefore, cannot produce the results of thought forgetting that it is not the brush that thinks, but the painter who uses it. That these writers are entirely mistaken is shown in every exhibition. A photographer who knows something of art may not be able to give us great works of genius, but if he cannot "fling a poem out," if he has learnt the grammar of his art, he may be able to tell us a story in fairly readable prose.

The incidents of country and seaside life are inexhaustible, and full of pictures adapted to the use of the photographer. A glance at the titles in a Royal Academy catalogue will show this, and should be full of suggestions. It is a question how much of his subject one artist may take from another. It is admitted that nothing can be absolutely original. It is allowed that one may borrow a hint

from another, but what may be the limit to the extent of the hint? I confess that I am always on the look out for something to appropriate, or, to put it more mildly, to adapt, but somehow or other, the materials of one art never seem to suit another, and, as far as my practice is concerned, subjects arise more naturally out of the incidents one meets with than out of books or exhibitions. It is not often that direct imitations of paintings are seen in photography; I remember only one or two. In one case a really fine subject was exhibited, and got a medal, which was afterwards found to be a reproduction of the motive and poses in modern dress of a Watteau subject engraved in the *Art Journal*; and I once saw an imitation of one of my own pictures by a Northumberland miner, who had taken to photography, and used pit girls for models. In the original I had tried to produce a variety of laughs from a subtle smile to a noisy scream, and the interest of the subject depended on the expressions, but the miner's models had evidently made it a serious business to copy the poses and forget the expressions altogether. I intended my picture to produce a smile, but the pitman's picture beat mine in this respect by a distance; it was infinitely more comic.

The moral is that when you steal an idea you had better serve it as the gipsies are said to do the stolen children, and disguise it beyond recognition, or give up this kind of intellectual larceny.

Further, I don't know that it is quite honest to take a title that has been appropriated by another, except, of course, such as is ordinary and commonplace, even if the subject is made to look different by re-arrangement. Only recently, on looking over a catalogue, at a first glance I thought somebody had been contributing a few of my old pictures, for there were the titles, but a second glance disclosed another man's name to them.



CHAPTER IX.—IN ACTION.

"Nothing is more strange in art than the way that chance and materials seem to favour you, when once you have thoroughly conquered them. Make yourself quite independent of chance, get your result in spite of it, and from that day forward all things will somehow fall as you would have them."—RUSKIN.



WE have theorised through several chapters; let us get into the open and have a little practice, for the spring is at hand, and we are already beginning to feel premonition of that "landscape fever" from which every good photographer must suffer at this time of year.*

With the rising of the sap comes the desire in the photographer to bring forth his camera and prepare for the summer campaign. He has probably not been idle during the winter. There have been effects of hoar frost and snow, curious, wonderful, fairy-like—not that fairies loved the cold weather. But it is to spring and summer, when the year is alive, that he must look for beauty.

We will assume that the amateur knows all that can be learnt in technical photography, and that the knowledge does not confuse his brain and incapacitate him from taking a negative. The one thing that I would impress on his mind is that perfect technical negatives are good as means, but the gain is loss when they become ends.

We will also assume that our object is to make pictures, not to take local views and diagrams of nature.

* Written early in the year.

Subjects for landscape are, as a rule, better when they are, like the voice of conscience, "still and small." To my mind there is no place like England for beautiful subjects suitable for the photographer. The scenes in other countries may be larger, vaster, and more varied, but somehow these subjects do not suit the camera. In a photograph the Alps become dwarfed, the grand pine forests black patches full of points, and the vineyards seem to be impossible, for I have never seen a photograph of one that pretended to picturesqueness. Our land is smaller and more possible, and contains such pictures as Mrs. Browning gives expression to in the following lines:—

"A ripple of land: such little hills, the sky
Can stoop to tenderly, and the wheat fields climb.
Such nooks of valleys lined by orchises,
Fed full of noises by invisible streams;
And open pastures where you scarcely tell
White daisies from white dew—at intervals
The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out
Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade."

It is a rule with me which I seldom break, never to go out with the camera without some definite purpose. The scene, to be photographed has been already selected and every detail thought out and arranged in a sketch—a sketch so slight, however, that it has no nearer resemblance to a picture than shorthand has to writing. The one exception to shorthand sketches is when a picture has to be produced by combination printing. It is then better to make a full-sized and elaborate drawing.

But to-day we will go on the chance of what we may pick up—roving, as they say in archery.

We shall not be at a loss for subjects. The country round about is beautiful, and if it were not, there should be no lack of materials; all that is wanted is the eye to see, and this is strengthened by practice. There is so much more open to us now than there was in the earlier days. We have not to carry a dark-room and its contents about with us. We have scarcely, when out, to think of our process at all. Then the subjects! Nearly all attempts to make pictures were defeated by the length of exposure. The twenty seconds exposure, once necessary, has now collapsed to one or two, and set free for photographers a world of

beauty. Figures can be introduced without fear of the negative being spoilt by movement: cattle, sheep, and other animals may be permitted to adorn foregrounds; and the sea-shore has become a happy hunting-ground. It is not now absolutely necessary to wait for a breathless day; and what is, perhaps, as important as anything else, every variety of light and shade may be attempted with a fair hope of success.

Yet, I like a still day—a day when the stir there is comes in gentle breezes with many waits between; I like also the hum of insects, the chirp of birds, the gentle noises of nature and sunshine. They all help towards the doing of good work.

In going out for what you can find, you should be as ready for a chance shot as a sportsman is for a rocketing pheasant. Look out! here is a picture before us. It is a group of cows in a meadow with a picturesque screen of trees for a middle distance. If those two white cows that are nearer to us than the others go away before you are ready, your picture is lost. Something wrong; you cannot see the picture on the ground glass! Why, you have got an orthochromatic yellow screen in the place of the stop. Take it out at once; don't let it flurry you; keep your head level. No hurry-flurry, and the least possible amount of excitement. Expose by hand as long as experience teaches you will be necessary to bring out the shadows. Lose your picture if you must, but do not have an under-exposed one. Too many photographs are under-exposed, and nothing is so melancholy as the "might have beens." You have got your picture just in time, for the cows are off. Now, where would you have been if you had used those exposure tables which you are still so reluctant to give up—the delight of the faddist, to the worker a hindrance? When you come to subjects of this sort, go straight away and get them done at once. You must not stop to consider;

"The flighty-purpose never is o'ertook,
Unless the deed go with it."

A knowledge of the rules of art we have been considering in previous chapters had another use here than to help you to compose your picture. It saved time, which was—not money, but a picture in this case; for you saw at once what

to do, and had not to hesitate, and think, and worry until the cows walked off and left you pictureless.

We now come to a subject over which we can take more time. It is a group of trees on the opposite bank of a narrow stream opening out into a pool, after rippling down a slight decline among moss-grown rocks and boulders. The upper parts of the trees are in shadow, for the sun is nearly behind them to the right, and the sunlight glints through the trunks and along the meadow, which, with the bank, reflects in the pool. Two little girls with baskets have just come up on their way to the mill, and are much interested in our operations. We must have them for models, to which they shyly agree, for there is nothing so shy as your juvenile rustic. It would be courting failure to try an elaborate subject with fresh-caught models, so we will try something simple. There is a sloping bank of broken earth, partly covered with large-leaved plants and wild flowers in the foreground. This bank is in bright sunshine, and finely contrasts the dark mass of trees and under-wood. We will place the figures on it. The sunlight and light dresses will make them "tell" strongly against the dark overgrown part of the stream, and make a fine balancing point to the whole. See how well that bit of light, so precious in its place, comes, intensified by the black basket which touches the white pinafore. This brilliant speck is broadened out by the lesser lightness of the sunlit bank, is echoed by the reflections in the water, and is carried through the picture. But note that the figures, though small, are the key-note of the picture. They form the strongest light and the strongest dark, to which every other light and dark, however large, is subordinate, because they are not of the same intensity.

So much for the composition; now for the models. It is most important that they shall not look conscious and stupid, and there is nothing a new model is so clever at as looking stupid. Here is an opportunity for guile. You must become a second Ananias, and tell them anything but the truth. Photographers, doctors, and dentists have licenses to practise deception for the good of their patients. Don't let them stare at the camera, or stand stiffly upright upon both legs with both hands at their sides. This they will

almost certainly try to do ; it is their notion of a respectful and proper position, and is the awful result of Board-school drilling, which is transforming English childhood into attitudinising prigs. Give a last look round, pull the bolt, let the platform fall, and we will hope that the completed result will be well hung.



CHAPTER X.—COMBINATION PRINTING: THEORY.

' Pictures are not to be judged by the strict law of optics ; they are altogether conventional. In Nature we cannot look at the distance and the foreground without imperceptibly altering the focus of the eye, neither can we look at two portions of a picture at the same moment, with attention, without altering the direction of the eye.'

G. BARNARD.



VERY photographer must at times feel the utter inadequacy of his means to represent the scene before him ; and this not from the absence of colour, which is so often deplored, or the difficulty of getting the lines of buildings upright, or the distance to look large enough, but because, however skilfully he may use the swing-back of his camera, he cannot, with some subjects, get the distance and foreground into focus at the same time. He looks at nature with his eyes and finds no trouble in getting all the planes in focus at apparently the same time, but he cannot get the same effect on his ground-glass screen. If he wishes to take a landscape with a group of figures rather large in the foreground—a very frequent class of subject with painters, and one becoming increasingly popular with photographers—he finds that if his figures are in focus his middle distance and distance are lost in blurr. This defect has been even advocated as a good quality by some authorities, and I myself have no objection, in special cases, to parts being a little out of focus ; but we ought to draw the line at blurring, and especially that kind of out-of-focusness which, with rapid rectilinear lenses, turns every little spot of light into a circle of meaningless distortion.

It may be worth while here to inquire what the eye does see when it is turned to a landscape. In a letter to the *AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER* of January 13th, 1888, Dr. Emerson says—"The human eye never yet saw all the objects in the different planes sharp at once, and though the optician's lens does this in a greater degree than the human eye, yet that 'photographic lens sharpness' I consider fatal to all artistic work."

The statement that the eye never sees the different planes in focus at the *same* time is a scientific fact, but as a matter of practical vision it seems to be based on imperfect observation; while to say that the lens covers more depth than the eye is not the general experience. Some lenses take in more planes than others, depending partly on the aperture of the diaphragm; but none of them have the power to instantaneously and unconsciously adapt themselves to the different planes as the eye does. In Lee's "*Handbook on Light*," I find a paragraph on the accommodation of the eye which exactly explains the difference between the action of a lens and human vision,—

"A distinct picture of an object by a lens is only obtained when the lens is properly adjusted in reference to the object and screen. If, whilst the lens and screen are kept in position, the object be placed nearer or farther away, the image becomes indistinct. Now, in the case of the eye, experience teaches us that objects are seen well enough, though their distances may vary considerably. It follows, therefore, that the eye must have the power of accommodating itself to the distance at which an object may be situated. This accommodation is effected by the *movements* of the crystalline lens—the suspensory ligaments are such as to cause a slight movement of the lens either forwards or backwards, according to the distance of the object looked at, whilst at the same time, from its elasticity, its curvature is also, changed, the anterior surface especially being affected."

This proves, what I think we all ought to have known, that the eye sees more than the object photographed added to a background of confusion.

If some prefer chaos to order, I can only reply that it is a sentiment, that is all. There is no court of appeal. We have only the general verdict of human beings that they *can see*

Perhaps it does not matter when we get our image out of focus whether we call it fuzziness, so easy to obtain and so foreign to photography, or atmosphere, one of its greatest beauties. It may be called, indefinitely, a question of taste. There are photographers who mistake fuzziness for tone, and who, in putting their pictures out of focus, think they have achieved a due appreciation of "values," and the word seems to please them. And it does happen sometimes perhaps, by a kind of gracious accident, that they do get a beautiful result by misusing their lenses (as when a bad shot hits a woodcock—"they *will* fly into it sometimes.") Not a photographic result, however, but something quite alien to its genius, as though it had foresworn its birthright; and, unfortunately, the general results are enough to sadden the soul of a sand-boy.

There is another consideration in this connection which the out-of-focus school seem to forget. If we are only to include in our pictures as much as the fixed eye sees, we must leave out a good deal laterally, for the eye does not include more than four or five degrees in focus at the same time. Something, also, must be allowed for the size of a picture. The eye would see at once the whole of a small picture, including a wide angle, an angle so wide that the different parts of it could not be seen in nature without turning the head.

It was a maxim with the Spartans that if your sword was short you should add a step to it. It being, I think, sufficiently proved that our present optical resources do not enable us to represent properly some of the simplest scenes around us which we ought, as artists, to reasonably expect to be able to obtain, we must try some other way that will help us to succeed. The obvious step that we must add to our short sword, until something better is invented, is combination printing. I have now had more than thirty years' experience of this method, and still think it not only the best, but the only way of getting many subjects which should not be lost to our art. It is of all others the process for the amateur; it will enable him to spend many pleasant hours, and haply achieve distinction. The method takes time and patience, no doubt, but you "get your own out of it"

Yet it must not be forgotten that just as combination printing allows greater liberty to the photographer, so also does it open out possibilities of abuse. The opponents of any particular method of procedure are apt to attack the weakest points, and combination printing—because, perhaps, it affords such infinite possibilities of failure as well as success—has been unmercifully attacked. Some of the reasons for objection are sufficiently curious. I remember, years ago, a photographic editor saying, “Oh! it is of no use writing it up and recommending it to our readers; it is much too difficult for the ordinary blundering photographer.” It is true the method was difficult at that time, for it had not been simplified and reduced to a system. It is not very difficult now, and the invention of register marks puts it within the reach of the amateur for simplicity and the professional for ease of production in quantity. I mean, of course, as a technical matter only, for the use of it necessitates a much wider knowledge of nature and art than is required by the one-plate photographer. This is compensated for by the pleasure which comes from wider knowledge. “We should have little pleasure were we never to flatter ourselves,” says a quaint old writer, and I take pleasure in thinking that I have added to the pleasures of photography by my persistent advocacy of this method, and I think I see the time coming when it will be used much more extensively. Its use is already nearly universal in a minor way, the printing-in of skies. More ambitious efforts are coming in “single spies;” as the intelligence and experience of amateurs increase, they will come in “battalions.”

There is fun also to be got out of double printing. It is amusing to see the joins pointed out in your pictures where they don't exist, and to read elaborate articles, illustrated by reference to some of your *single plate* photographs, showing what a pernicious thing this same combination printing is. Some kind people often overlook the real meaning of a picture, and having no mind to detect the artist's mind behind the exposure and the developer, are, nevertheless, wonderfully sharp and pleased to detect joins which do not exist.

In the next chapter I hope to give such clear and simple directions for combination printing as shall be easily followed by all who read.

CHAPTER XI.—COMBINATION PRINTING: PRACTICE.

"This laborious investigation, I am aware, must appear superfluous to those who think that everything is to be done by felicity and the power of native genius."—REYNOLDS.



THE simplest operation in Combination Printing is that by which a sky is added to a landscape. I have spoken of the precautions necessary to be taken, and the mistakes to avoid, in the chapter on the Sky, which chapter should be read before the negative to be used is selected. It will not be necessary, therefore, to go over the same ground again, but I shall refer only to the practical details of the operation.

The landscape negative should have a dense sky, and it seldom happens that the sky of a properly exposed and developed landscape has sufficient density. If it be weak, or have any defects, it must be stopped out. This is best done with black varnish, and if the space is large it would be well to cover over the greater part of it with orange paper, to obviate the annoyance of the varnish breaking up, as it is apt to do when applied to a large surface. For landscapes it is better to apply the varnish at the back of the plate; by this means a softer edge is produced in printing than if painted on the film. It may be used close up to objects with definite edges, but should be used more lightly round the edges of trees, especially round those in which the branches are loosely formed, admitting light between

them, so as to vignette into them. It will not always be necessary to stop out small lights between branches, as they usually develop more densely than broad spaces. With some subjects, such as those which have tolerably level horizons, it will be sufficient to cover over part of the sky while printing, leaving that part near the horizon gradated from the horizon into white.

In applying black varnish to the back of a negative, occasions will often occur where a softened or vignetted edge is required for joining; this may be done by dabbing the edge slightly, while wet, with the finger, or if a broader or more delicately gradated edge be required, a dabber made with wash-leather may be applied. If it is found that the varnish dries too quickly, it is a good plan to mix a little turpentine with it.

When a print is taken, the place where the sky ought to be will, of course, be represented by plain white paper. Now take a suitable cloud negative, place it in the printing frame, and adjust the print on it so that the sky shall print in the proper place. This is easily done if the negative is a good one. It should be sufficiently thin for its position to be easily seen. When exposed to the light the landscape part should be covered with black velvet or other suitable mask. This mask should be gently moved at short intervals during the printing, so as to vignette the sky slightly into the landscape. This will not be found a tedious process, for if the negative is of the right quality the whole process ought not to occupy five minutes.

Care should be taken that the sky is not printed so dark as to appear to come in front of the landscape—a common fault. If it is found necessary to print the sky over trees or other tall objects, take care to select a sky which will not be so dark as to partly obliterate them, or show the forms of the clouds in front of them, and above all, avoid leaving a white line round the edges of objects.

If large numbers are required, it would facilitate the printing to use register marks, as described further on.

Portraits to which natural landscape backgrounds are added are very effective, and well within the reach of the amateur. I will not take space to describe the method, as it will be easily understood after reading the following.

I now propose to describe and illustrate the method of joining a distance sky and middle distance to a foreground. When the amateur masters this properly, he will be able to employ combination printing to any extent he may desire.

Our problem shall be to make a picture of the following materials: Boats on a pebbly beach, with a figure; the figure to be of importance, but not large—say $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in a 15 by 12 plate, and in focus. A stormy sea, and sky, which shall be in focus, and yet be atmospheric. I do not hesitate to say this subject is impossible at the present time on a single plate, and that the lens to accomplish such a feat will never be made. There is another difficulty besides that of focus, which I admit may be overcome in the future. The exposure for the foreground requires perhaps one hundred times longer than the sea. The difference in the example I am about to give was much greater than this.

I give this example with some reluctance, for the picture has been popular, and the most efficacious way of knocking a picture or a sentiment endways is to put it under the microscope and analyse it to death.

For this picture we have two negatives. The one contains the foreground, exposure 2 seconds; the other the sea, exposed with a rather slow drop shutter, so as to give the feeling of movement to the waves.

The object now is to stop out all of the foreground negative that will not be required. This should be done as much as possible on the back of the negative, so that the edge may print soft. Stopping on the film side is apt to produce very hard, sharp lines, but there are places where it is impossible to avoid doing so. In this picture the stopping round the boat and part of the figure was done on the film, the other parts on the back. It will be sufficient to use the black varnish for the breadth of an inch, and paste orange paper over the rest of the space. It is sometimes possible to vignette two edges well into one another. The easiest joins are when a light comes against a dark; the most difficult when two equal half-tones come together, as they do in the bow of the principal boat and the sea.

At the top of the plate, just outside the margin of the



COMBINATION PRINTING.
"Nor' Easter." Fig. 1.—Foreground.



COMBINATION PRINTING.
"Nor' Easter." Fig. 2.—Sky and Distance.



COMBINATION PRINTING.
"Nor' Easter." Fig. 3.—Completed Picture.

picture, two registering corners should be made, as shown in the illustration. This may be done by cutting into the orange paper with a knife, and, if necessary, removing the film outside the marks.

The invention of these register marks, I may mention, has rendered combination printing remarkably easy, and fitted it for carbon, platinotype, or any of the invisible processes. Formerly every print had to be fitted by sight; the loss of time, trouble, and material was enormous, and the results inferior.

A print should now be taken on plain matt paper (the curling of albumenised paper makes it difficult to use). The result will be as in the first illustration.

The next part of the process is to stop out all of the sea negative that is not required. Take the unfixed print of the foreground negative, and very carefully with a pair of scissors, in a dull light, or with a sharp knife on glass, cut out the printed portion. Lay this as a mask on the sea negative, and gum it at the corners. It may be more effectually secured when all is found to be right. Now take the white part of the print, and cut out the register marks very accurately. That is, the parts marked black in the illustration. Lay the print on the negative so that it accurately fits the mask, lay a weight on it, and with strips of gummed paper mark where the registering falls. See the second illustration.

At this point, if a print were taken of No. 1 negative, the corners cut and laid to the register marks on No. 2 negative, and printed, the two would be found to fit, but the joins would be hard and cutting. This must be corrected.

Lay the sea negative on a transparent desk, or other convenient support, and let black varnish on the back, whenever there are sharp lines, take the place of the paper mask on the film side. A great deal may be done now in vignetting and overlapping parts; this must be left to the judgment of the operator. Of course, it must not be forgotten to cut away the mask where black varnish has been substituted.

If the operation has been properly performed, the next print will be something like illustration No. 3.

To work out a large group it is only necessary to play variations on what I have already described. As many

figures as possible should be taken on each negative, and the position of the joins so contrived that they shall be least noticed.

In concluding this subject I must caution the student against the vagaries of albumenised paper. It has a habit of expanding when damp that upsets all calculations and register marks, if precautions are not taken to guard against it. This difficulty is not felt in platinotype, and for ease and certainty I prefer the latter process for combination printing.



CHAPTER XII.—WHAT IS TRUTH? LIMITATIONS.

"The arts themselves, as well as their varieties, are closely related to each other, and have a tendency to unite, and even lose themselves in each other; but herein lies the duty, the merit, the dignity of the true artist, that he knows how to separate that department in which he labours from the others, and, so far as may be, isolates it."—GOETHE.



FEW words on truth, and what it means, may not be out of place in concluding this series of chapters on Art-photography. What is truth? is as difficult to answer now as it was in Pilate's time. It is quite certain that art truth does not mean mirror-like similitude. In the first place, if it could be done, it would be only mechanical reproduction; in the second it is impossible. The most dazzling brightness we can attain to is a sheet of white paper—many times short of the brightness of the sun. We play many octaves below the key of nature, therefore our lack of means denies us the possibility of similitude, even were it desirable.

Truth in art has been defined as the faithful statement, either to the mind or senses, of any fact in nature. But what is faithfulness? Every man sees nature differently. Among painters we may have the best fact about a man to be told by a Holl; a grey and yellow dream of a Boughton; the direct statement of a Moore; the wax-work of a Sant, or the raw crudity of a McWhirter. Yet they all claim to be true. Then there are many varieties of photographers. There are two kinds, both of which I hold to be wrong, and to miss the truth. There is the Mr.

Bounderby of photography, who must have facts and nothing but facts, and there is the misty man who persuades himself that his pictures are artistic because they are out of focus. It seems to me that the place to seek truth is somewhere between these extremes. The man of strict fact ignores beauty; the man who dwells in mist substitutes a dream for reality, and of all arts photography deals most with the real; besides, it smacks a little of inconsistency to preach nature and produce blurr. Atmosphere is quite possible without any sacrifice of natural definition. I have seen photographs over which the eye could range for miles, and lose itself in the infinite sky beyond, that were quite as sharp all over as the lens and double printing would allow. It is quite a delusion to suppose, because the distance is foggy and out of focus, that it is atmospheric. This sort of thing is more likely to remind us of bad manipulation than grand art.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood in what I have just said, and that my readers will not think I am advocating excessive definition. I am objecting only to the works of those who insist, to speak vulgarly, on going the whole hog or none—of those who get their pictures ostentatiously out of focus, and say, "This is art, no others are in it." On the contrary, I am inclined to think that if there is anything worse than the kind of out-of-focus effect I mean, it is the brilliant, cruel, pitiless definition to be seen in some photographs.

It is a common saying, "Cannot we see what nature is with our own eyes, and find out what is like her?" The remark is also often made, "It is a photograph, therefore must be true." It is possible for all intelligent and observant people to judge of fact, but it requires cultivation to judge of what is truth. It is a great mistake to think you can see a thing because it is before your eyes. A child may recognise a rough sketch or even a caricature of its father, which, when analysed by eyes taught to see, may not be true in any particular, except in the general resemblance. A very black and white photograph of a scene may be recognisably like, but, with the proper gradations of light and shade omitted, would not be true. Then there are pictures which may look true, or superficially true, with-

out being fact, such as the so-called moonlight views, made by over-printing negatives taken in sunlight.

It is sometimes said in commendation of a print, "It does not look at all photographic." This is not only complimentary to an untruth, but it is not flattering to an art. Why should we try to make our pictures look like the results of other arts, except in the general sense which applies to all art? Is it praise to say a water colour drawing looks like an oil painting, or the reverse? It is said that every man should have the courage of his opinions, and a photographer should not be ashamed of his productions looking like photographs. It is as bad taste as being pleased with graining that looks like real wood. Then, again, there are those who are never satisfied unless they are overstating the truth, and giving us—

"Forms more real than living man."

Among these are the retouchers, who, not content with correcting the little blemishes of nature, substitute an artificial product of their own for "the art that nature makes."

Mr. Bartlett, an excellent American writer and photographer, seems to hit the truth when he says, "The object of art is not to change nature, but to interpret her aright; to render a scene or an incident so that it shall give delight to the beholder, not by the novelty of unrealness, but by the originality of unexpectedness. This originality is not denied to photography any more than to painting, and when the photographer achieves it, is he not entitled to the name of artist?"

What the photographer has to do is to make pictures with the means at his disposal, and to present them as having been done with those means and no other, or in imitation of no other; to take advantage of the peculiarities of his process, and to hide its shortcomings, or find compensations for them. He will be wise to admit that his art has its limits, and not attempt to do more than they will allow.

At present, the limitations of photography, as an art, have not been definitely fixed. I do not think we are justified at present in representing any strong emotion, or selecting such objects as those which seem to delight

Holl and Israels, full of the wail of suffering humanity. Yet the time may come when these subjects shall be rendered so supremely that we shall forget the means, forget that the murder, the funeral, or the burglary was present before the lens, or that the dead sailor or the bereaved widow acted as models for the photographer. Photographs of what it is evident to our senses cannot exist and be brought before the lens, should not be attempted. Canute should not command the waves, nor the dead body of Harold be buried on our plates. Cherubs and angels, with or without bodies, should not be represented floating in the air; no ghost should walk—anyway, in a serious picture—it may be allowed, perhaps, in a scientific toy. A photograph must represent truth as we know it, not as we may guess it. There must be no clap-trap, no straining after forced effects. An over-printed sunset must not be allowed to do duty as a moonrise. On the other hand, it would be difficult to point out all that may make legitimate photographic pictures. The English photographer is fortunate in living in the most beautiful country in the world for landscape suited to his art, while the suitability of the subjects arising from scenes and incidents of English country life cannot be surpassed elsewhere.



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